

Education, Children and Young People Committee

Wednesday 15 January 2025
2nd Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

The Promise

Introduction

1. In November 2023, the Committee held an [evidence session](#) on progress in relation to the Promise. As part of that session, significant concerns were raised around social work recruitment and retention and how this was affecting the Promise implementation across Scotland.
2. In March 2024, the Committee also [spoke informally](#) with 37 young people from across Scotland via Who Cares? Scotland. This highlighted the impact that social work recruitment and retention issues were having on care experienced children and young people. This included frequent changes to Social Workers and/or infrequent access to Social Work support.
3. At its meeting on 6 November 2024, the Committee agreed to hold three sessions on the Promise focusing on workforce issues, whole family wellbeing and voice.
4. The Committee took evidence on workforce issues at its meeting on [4 December 2024](#).

Committee meeting

5. At its meeting today, the Committee will be hearing from practitioners involved in early intervention projects that are working to support whole family wellbeing, in a roundtable format.
6. The Committee is keen to learn more about how these projects work with children and families, how they improve outcomes for children and young people and how they help families to avoid reaching crisis point.
7. Participating in the roundtable, are:
 - Liz Nolan, Director of Children and Families, Aberlour, who will be talking about Mother and Child Recovery Houses
 - Fiona Bradford, Service Manager for Criminal Exploitation Intervention Service, Action for Children, who will be talking about the work of the Inverclyde Transformation Initiative project
 - Barbara Keenan, Operational Director of Children's Services, Action for Children, who has management oversight of the Upper Nithsdale Family Service

- Lauren Nicolson, Project Manager for Families Together, East Lothian Council who will be talking about the work of the East Lothian CSPP
- Linda Richards, Service Manager for Looked After Services, Perth and Kinross Council, who will be speaking about the REACH project
- Claire McGuigan, Youth, Family and Community Learning Locality Manager, South Lanarkshire Council, who will be talking about South Lanarkshire Pathfinders

Supporting information

8. Some background information on the participants has been included at **Annexe A** and SPICe has produced a briefing paper for this session which is attached at **Annexe B**.
9. Aberlour has provided a written submission which is included at **Annexe C**.
10. In correspondence with the Committee clerks, officials from Perth and Kinross Council highlighted that background information on the REACH project is available on the Perth and Kinross Council website:
 - [the initial Transformation Report: Review and Remodelling of Residential Care \(Children and Young People\)](#) which recommended REACH
 - update reports on REACH [22 August 2018 \(agenda item 7\)](#) and [4 September 2019 \(agenda item 9\)](#)
 - [Final update on the Implementation of REACH \(agenda item 9\)](#)

Committee Clerks
January 2025

Annexe A

The Promise: Whole Family Support

Session participants

Information about the projects Members will be hearing about at today's meeting is below. Where it is known that a project is funded by the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF), this is stated in the text.

Mother and Child Recovery Houses (Aberlour)

Aberlour delivers two Mother and Child Recovery Houses (MCHRs) in Scotland: one in Dundee and the other in Falkirk.

The aim of the support provided by the projects is to keep families together by creating safe and nurturing spaces for women and their babies during their recovery from drug and/or alcohol dependency.

Holistic support is provided in the houses, and this includes support with parenting skills, emotional wellbeing and therapeutic support.

In partnership with other organisations, Aberlour also delivers Intensive Perinatal Service in Falkirk that provides community-based support to pregnant women and new mothers affected by substance use.

The project is funded through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF).

Inverclyde Transformation Initiative project (Action for Children)

The Inverclyde Transformation Initiative's Serious Organised Crime (SOC) Early Intervention and Prevention for Families project takes a collaborative early intervention approach to supporting families where young people are at risk of involvement with SOC.

Action for Children is one of the partners involved in this work due to their expertise in supporting families where young people are at risk of criminal exploitation linked to SOC. It provides around 100 young people with intensive 1-1 support focusing on risk reduction, peer mentoring and diversionary activities.

The project builds on an existing model developed and used in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. It aims to build wider understanding at national level of SOC within the delivery of family support, sharing learning from the project across all local authorities in Scotland.

The WFWF is funding the project until 2025-26.

Upper Nithsdale Family Service (Action for Children)

A project led by Action for Children providing whole-family intensive relationship support. This aims to stabilise families and enable children on the edges of care to stay at home.

The team work with each member of a family to improve overall wellbeing. Support offered can help parents towards employment, reduce children's involvement in crime and improve the overall mental health and wellbeing of families.

REACH project (Perth and Kinross Council)

REACH is a multi-disciplinary team providing intensive support to families with complex needs where it is likely a young person (aged 12-18) within the family is at risk of becoming accommodated away from home.

Support is delivered in the family home or within the community. This aims to support the rehabilitation of young people by empowering families, reducing risk and developing resilience and problem-solving skills.

The team include members from Children's Services, Education and NHS Tayside. This enables young people to access a range of specialist support in one place, when they need it and reducing the need for multiple referrals.

A 2021 REACH implementation report for Perth and Kinross Council stated:

“In 2019, Perth and Kinross Council was ranked 1st out of 32 Scottish Local Authorities in terms of the balance of care for the percentage of looked after children being looked after in the community at 96.1%. In 2020, after a drop of 0.5% the Council was ranked 2nd out of 32. It is recognised that REACH contributes to Perth and Kinross Council being one of the top performing Councils in this Local Government Benchmarking Framework indicator.”

The REACH team is funded from existing council budgets.

East Lothian CSPP and Families Together (East Lothian Council)

East Lothian's Children's Services Planning Partnership (CSPP) receives funding through the WFWF. One of the projects funded by the CSPP is Families Together East Lothian. This is a service aiming to offer 'one-stop shop' support to families when they need it. The project can provide support with children and family life, accessing services, finance and budgeting and household issues.

There are 12 Family Outreach workers on the team, covering different areas in East Lothian. They work with families to offer confidential advice and support and help them to make practical changes.

Families, schools, health visitors and others can contact Families Together for advice and support.

South Lanarkshire Pathfinders (South Lanarkshire Council)

Pathfinders is a multi-agency, school-based family support initiative for families with children on the edges of care. The project works with secondary schools and social workers to engage with families with young people not attending school, aiming to prevent the young people from being taken into care.

Young people are referred to the project by schools or social work, and discussion with families is held within school hubs. As it is multi-agency, the need for multiple referrals is minimised and the time taken for families to identify the relevant point of contact is reduced.

Money from the WFWF has enabled the project to be scaled up.

Annexe B

SPICe

The Information Centre
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

Education, Children and Young People Committee

Wednesday 15 January 2025

The Promise: Whole Family Support

Introduction

This SPICe briefing has been prepared ahead of the Committee’s evidence session on children’s social work reform and The Promise. The session is a roundtable with representatives of projects using an early intervention/whole family support approach to supporting children and their families.

Background information about the Independent Care Review, care system reform, The Promise, child protection and the care system can be found in the [SPICe briefing for the Committee’s first evidence session on this topic](#), which took place on 4 December 2024.

Whole Family Support

A key recommendation of the Independent Care Review’s Promise report in 2020 was that children and their families should be supported to stay together where possible:

“Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay – and families must be given support together, to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.” – [The Promise, Independent Care Review, 2020](#)

The review report set out that this should be achieved by ensuring universal services (such as schools and mental health services) offer support to all families when they need it, including those with care experience and by providing intensive family support for families with children on the edges of care. The review noted the need to ensure impacts of poverty, domestic abuse, substance use and other factors are taken into account by services and those providing them. It set out ten principles of intensive family support, stating it must be:

- community based
- responsive and timely
- working with family assets
- empowering and give agency to children and their families
- flexible
- holistic and relational
- therapeutic
- non-stigmatising
- patient and persistent; and
- underpinned by children's rights.

The Promise's [Plan 21-24](#) set out whole family support as an initial step of care reform. It stated that, by 2024, intensive family support would be embedded into practice of all organisations supporting children, and accessing this support would feel "integrated to those who use them".

The Scottish Government's initial Promise implementation plan – [Keeping the Promise to our children, young people and families](#) – was published in March 2022. It defined whole family support as:

"...tailored, multi-disciplinary support which builds on the strengths of the family, and is available as soon as it is needed, for as long as it is needed." - [Keeping the Promise to our children, young people and families](#), Scottish Government, March 2022

The Scottish Government's 2022 plan states that support should wrap around families, tailored to their needs and building on their strengths, with "seamless" transition from children to adult services. It also states the potential for this approach to break cycles:

"We know that families in which a child enters the care system in the first 12 months of life, are more likely to be already known to services prior to the child's birth. There is a significant opportunity for universal health services to break these cycles of poor outcomes and support families to stay together." - [Keeping the Promise to our children, young people and families](#), Scottish Government, March 2022

The 2022 plan included priorities to support the development of whole family support. The Scottish Government's 2024 update to the plan provided information about progress so far. Key commitments and progress toward them are displayed in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Scottish Government whole family support commitments and progress

2022 commitment	Progress by 2024
<p>Realign spend, so that at least 5% of all community based health and social care spend will be invested in preventative whole family support –estimated to be around £500m by 2030.</p>	<p>The progress update does not provide detail beyond stating: “Discussions are ongoing with Public Services Reform and health finance colleagues to ensure consistent understanding of the commitment, including engagement with health finance to determine how to identify current spend on this area. We will develop a forward looking plan on how to meet this commitment as part of our investment approach.”</p>
<p>Invest “at least £500 million” in the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund “over the course of this Parliament”.</p>	<p>£110m invested so far: £96m in Children’s Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs) (Element 1); £1.6m in national support for local partnership working (Element 2); and £13.1m to support 12 projects across Scottish Government policy areas (e.g. funding mother and child units, tackling child poverty and intensive support for young people).</p> <p>The 2025-26 Budget allocates another £50m to the fund, leaving £340m still to be announced.</p>
<p>Provide £4m funding per year for the Promise Partnership Fund, offering support to organisations and projects taking forward early intervention work.</p>	<p>£12m (£4m p.a.) administered through the fund between December 2022 and March 2025. 100 organisations received funding toward projects focusing on areas such as supporting the care sector, workforce, helping siblings stay together and moving on from care.</p>
<p>Introduce a Scottish Recommended Allowance (SRA) for foster and kinship carers, reviewing kinship and foster care support and kinship care legislation.</p>	<p>The Scottish Government announced the introduction of SRA in August 2023, with weekly allowance rates of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 to 4 year-olds: £168.31 • 5 to 10 year-olds: £195.81 • 11 to 15 year-olds: £195.81 • 16-years-old and over: £268.41 <p>Fostering and kinship care organisations have called for the payments to rise annually with inflation.</p>

	<p>The Scottish Government has confirmed that rates will not rise for 2024-25, stating SRA will be reviewed to assess its effectiveness.</p>
<p>Support people to meet cost of living challenges, investing £10m in advice services.</p>	<p>£4.7m invested in Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships since 2021. A further £2.5m committed in 2023-25 to the Advice in Accessible Settings Fund delivered by Advice UK.</p>
<p>Introduce a Whole Family Approach to drug and alcohol support.</p>	<p>Scottish Government is providing support to Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs), an event on a Whole Family Approach for ADPs was held in Highland. Specialist family services facility Harper House opened in November 2022, and the facility aims to become a Centre of Excellence for whole family interventions. The charity Aberlour also opened two Mother and Child Houses.</p>
<p>Introduce a Whole Family Approach to children and young people’s mental health.</p>	<p>Joint Strategic Board for Children and Family Mental Health (JSB) set up by Scottish Government and COSLA to consider addressing gaps in provision.</p> <p>The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Delivery Plan (2023-25) commits to fund enhancement of crisis and distress services for children and young people, with children in or on the edges of care identified as an at-risk group.</p>
<p>Introduce wraparound childcare support to help working parents.</p>	<p>Now referred to as ‘School Age Childcare (SACC)’, the 2024 update states 4,200 children from low income families are accessing these services.</p> <p>This commitment is primarily being delivered by 6 ‘Early Adopter Communities’. A Written Answer from June 2024 sets out £20m has been invested since October 2022.</p> <p>The Access to Childcare Fund provided funding for 8 projects.</p> <p>31 football clubs provided access to before and after school care and holiday</p>

	clubs through the Scottish Football Association Extra Time Programme .
Reduce the impact of family imprisonment by supporting those impacted.	<p>The update states £807,000 was provided in 2024-25 for Prison Visitor Centres.</p> <p>Families Outside received core funding of £141,750 and grant funding of £141,773, working on projects such as Staying Connected, focusing on children with a sibling in prison.</p> <p>The Scottish Prison Service’s (SPS) Family and Parenting strategy 2024-2029 seeks to improve understanding of the impact of imprisonment on families.</p> <p>SPS also have a mother and baby policy promoting the welfare of mothers and babies in their care. A national custodial facility for women at HMP & YOI Stirling opened in 2023 along with two community custody units in Dundee and Glasgow offering support for women who benefit from closer community contact.</p>
Introduce trauma informed care and support.	<p>Work is ongoing with COSLA, the Improvement Service, Resilience Learning Partnership and NHS Education for Scotland.</p> <p>The National Trauma Transformation Programme provides learning resources, guidance and implementation support to help all sectors of the workforce become trauma informed.</p>

Promise Progress Framework

The [Promise Scotland published its Progress Framework](#) in December 2024. This is a document bringing together national indicators with the intention of providing a picture of overall progress and give organisations a structure to aid them with their own reporting.

It contains ten initial vision statements taken from The Promise. Each vision statement has an attached set of outcomes/indicators. These are split into core indicators, looking at change the Promise can directly influence and contextual

indicators tracking the context within which the Promise is operating. The summary below **focuses on the outcomes most relevant to whole family support.**

The Framework finds that the number of children in care is decreasing, with a 14% decrease in the total number of children in care since 2020 and a 16% decrease since 2019-20. However, it is important to note that the [Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection \(CELCIS\) has previously said](#) the figures on children in care provide “only an outline drawing”, missing the details needed for complete understanding, such as information about unmet need, changed thresholds for escalation or barriers to services. CELCIS also noted there was a 39% drop in the number of children being taken into care in the months after the pandemic started and numbers have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

The Framework also sets out the following information on progress to outcomes related to whole family support:

- Progress on work to gather national data on child deaths, noting that the first national report on child death reviews was published in March 2024.
- The number of children in temporary accommodation has risen by 33% since 2020 and the overall number of households assessed as homeless has increased by 6% since 2019-20.
- Rates of child poverty are “broadly stable”.
- In 2023, 42% of children on the Child Protection Register had domestic abuse listed as a concern – similar to the 2020 figure of 43%.
- The proportion of children in the care system experiencing multiple home moves has been around 4% since 2020.
- The attendance rate of care experienced pupils dropped from 87.9% in 2020-21 to 84.4% in 2022-23 and was also 2.4% lower than in 2018-19.
- At 97 exclusions per 1000 pupils, the rate of exclusion for care experienced pupils was around six times that of all pupils in 2022-23. This is up from 78 in 2020-21.
- In the quarter up to June 2024, 84.1% of care experienced people referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services were seen within 18 weeks, a decrease from 86% the previous quarter but an increase on the 2020 percentage of 61.7%.
- The percentage of children referred to the children's reporter on offence grounds has decreased by 4.8%, from 2,840 in 2019-20 to 2,701 in 2023-24.

The framework document states an additional indicator set on health outcomes and access to health services is under development.

Whole Family Wellbeing Fund

[The 2021-22 Programme for Government \(PfG\)](#) committed to a Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF) of “at least £500m” over Session 6 of Parliament. This is aimed at tackling issues faced by families before they need crisis intervention. The PfG commitment stated:

“We are committed to investing at least £500m over the life of this Parliament to create a Whole Family Wellbeing Fund. This will enable the building of universal, holistic support services, available in communities across Scotland, giving families access to the help they need, where and when they need it. This will help reduce the need for crisis intervention and contribute to improving people’s lives across a wide range of different areas, including but not limited to, child and adolescent mental health, child poverty, alcohol and drugs misuse and educational attainment. Fundamentally, this is about significantly reducing the number of children and young people who are living away from their families by 2030.” – [Programme for Government 2021-22](#)

The PfG also stated that from 2030, at least 5% of community-based health and social care spend will be focused on preventative measures. The overall intention of this preventative spend is to reduce the number of children being taken into care. The PfG commitment stated:

“Our ambition is that, from 2030, we will be investing at least 5% of all community-based health and social care spend in preventative whole family support measures that will enable us to create a Scotland where more children will only know care, compassion and love, and not a ‘care system’.” - [Programme for Government 2021-22](#)

Subsequent PfGs have not mentioned the WFWF £500m investment, however the [2022 Promise Implementation Plan](#) does refer to it.

The Promise Oversight Board’s second report, published in June 2023, welcomed the WFWF but highlighted the need for it to be:

“...seen in the context of the challenging financial landscape facing local authorities, which means the money may simply end up mitigating cuts to existing services – rather than upscaling to meet the aims of the promise.” – [Promise Oversight Board Report Two, June 2023](#)

The Oversight Board called for full transparency around use of the funding, along with a clear timeline for reaching the 5% threshold for preventative spend.

The Scottish Government’s [2024 Promise Implementation Plan update](#) sets out progress toward meeting the £500m WFWF commitment (see ‘Whole Family Wellbeing Fund progress’ section below). The 2024 also sets out an investment approach timeline for WFWF. While this does not provide figures for overall investment, it does set out a general approach up until 2031-32 with the caveat that funding past 2026-27 will be determined by a new administration.

Whole Family Wellbeing Fund progress

The WFWF was introduced in 2022 with the aim of transforming delivery of family support to enable families to access the help they need when they need it. The fund is split into three elements:

- Element 1: Funding provided to Children's Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs) to support scale up and delivery of whole family support provision, with a focus on early intervention rather than intervention at the point of crisis.
- Element 2: Central support provided via a Scottish Government transformation team to build local capacity for system change in relation to family support. This includes a learning network and a knowledge hub to share information and best practice.
- Element 3: Support for projects taking a cross-government approach to system change.

The Scottish Government's commitment to provide £500m over this session of Parliament has so far amounted to £110m since 2022. [Written Answer S6W-29612](#) from September 2024 details that:

“Since 2022 over £110m of Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF) was invested by the Scottish Government to deliver a transformational change in holistic family support so that families get the right support, in the right way and at the right time. The funding was distributed as follows:

- £96m provided for Children's Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs) (Element 1) via the General Revenue Grant to build local service capacity for change and to transform family support services.
- £1.6m National Support for Local Delivery (Element 2), includes a package of activity aimed at supporting local transformation. This part of the funding also supports the wider evaluation and research work for WFWF.
- £13.1m for taking a cross Scottish Government approach to system change (Element 3) which is supporting 12 projects across Scottish Government policy areas to help progress the aims of the Programme.”

The Scottish Government's [2024 update on implementation of the Promise](#) sets out an investment approach for the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund on page 91. While this goes up to 2031-32, it does not indicate allocations past 2025-26 and also notes that funding past 2026-27 will be determined by the next administration following the Scottish election in 2026. The plan focuses on extending and expanding existing projects, providing funding to prevent crisis in the initial years and allocating additional funding for local development.

[Level 4 data for the Scottish Government's 2025-26 Budget](#) shows that £50m is allocated for the WFWF for 2025-26 – the same amount of funding as was in the

2023-24 and 2024-25 budgets. This will bring the total allocated to the WFWF since 2022 to £160m.

The Scottish Government provided SPICe with a breakdown of the £96m Element 1 funding allocated to CSPPs since 2022-23. This can be viewed at **Annexe A** of this briefing.

An [evaluation of year 1 of the WFWF](#) was carried out by IFF Research, commissioned by the Scottish Government. This was published in January 2024 and looked at the implementation of elements 1 and 2 of the funding. It concluded that, in general, CSPPs and partners had “engaged well with the ambitions of WFWF in Year 1”, with “substantial progress” made by most though some key activities toward early outcomes were found to be outstanding in some areas.

CSPP leads generally reported plans required to access WFWF funding were straightforward to complete, though some said they would have liked to receive information earlier and “found it difficult to progress at the pace envisioned by the Scottish Government for Year 1 implementation”, requiring more time to carry out meaningful change.

The time-limited nature of WFWF impacted operational capacity, with many CSPPs struggling to fill posts due to concerns about the period of time up to 2026 being too short a timescale to bring about lasting change. CSPP leads also reported they would welcome more opportunities to understand the work being carried out by other CSPPs.

The evaluation report stated that work to engage children, young people and their families in the development of projects was not happening consistently.

On engagement with the third sector, the report concluded that where partnerships already existed the pace of implementation was faster. Where new relationships were being formed, this could impact pace of change. In addition, commissioning cycles of third sector organisations posed challenges to work within. Overall, more work to ensure the third sector is given the knowledge to engage was found to be needed.

The report concluded that, in order to make progress, the Scottish Government and CSPPs should focus on:

- Mobilising the workforce across CSPPs to deliver local WFWF plans, embedding the principles of whole family support and ensuring necessary skills are in place for whole system monitoring enabling evidence-based decision making.
- Encouraging collaboration and relationship building within and across CSPPs, working toward a clear, strategic vision and understanding of system change and how WFWF will bring it about.
- Establishing feedback systems and engaging in ongoing consultation with partners, children and young people and their families in order to inform delivery of family support.

- Gather data and evidence to understand progress of WFWF activities and outcomes.

Previous evidence heard

The Committee has held evidence sessions on The Promise on [22 November 2023](#) and [4 December 2024](#). An informal evidence session with care experienced young people was held on [27 March 2024](#).

During the 22 November 2023 session, Fraser McKinlay of The Promise encouraged a “cash-first approach” at local and national level, giving families money to support them through difficult times. Fraser McKinlay also acknowledged that funding was being used for “things that would not otherwise happen” in many places, however he added:

“There are some grey areas where things were due to be reduced or cut and the money has helped to sustain something—that is not necessarily a bad thing, by the way, if people have managed to continue that funding...We need to get a wee bit more specific about that dynamic and be a bit clearer about how we ensure that the funding is designed to help make those changes in local systems.” – [Official Report, 22/11/23](#)

Claire Burns of CELCIS also stated there was “no doubt” that some funding will have been used:

“...trying to stabilise the system. Who can lay blame for that in a system where things are really difficult?” - [Official Report, 22/11/23](#)

Mike Burns of Social Work Scotland highlighted the need to:

“...connect the Verity house agreement and a dialogue on tackling poverty, employment and all-age childcare with the whole family wellbeing fund.” - [Official Report, 22/11/23](#)

Claire Burns highlighted the need for investment in leadership and collaboration between leaders, including people with responsibility for education, social work, social care, finance and commissioning:

“...because they can unlock some of the barriers that we face. We need to work with them.” - [Official Report, 22/11/23](#)

At the [4 December 2024 session](#), Fraser McKinlay said while there had been some progress on whole family support, the “system has got in the way of itself” on the WFWF, later adding:

“There is no doubt that some of the investment in the whole family wellbeing fund has not yet reached the places that it needs to reach. Too often, we have spent it on things that matter to the system and not to the families that are

supposed to feel the difference. We still have a very long way to go.” - [Official Report, 4/12/24](#)

Claire Burns spoke of a project where access to whole family support to maximise income was being provided through health visitors with funding from social work. This made accessing support less stigmatising for people. However, a cut to the number of health visitors meant social workers had to go back to delivering the support. Claire Burns said this was an example of:

“...a complete tension in the system between people trying really hard to meet the policy objectives and the current financial climate, which is pushing against that all the time.” – [Official Report, 4/12/24](#)

She later added that the lack of long-term funding for effective projects meant that maintaining and sustaining change was often difficult.

In response to a question on delayed allocation of WFWF money by local authorities, Laura Caven of COSLA stated:

“The money was delayed in coming out to local authorities in the first place. Also, it is short-term funding, which is difficult for local authorities to work with. An additional factor is that it was not for local authorities to decide how that money was to be spent. Authorities had to work with community or children’s services planning partnerships to decide what the best use of that funding would be at a local level, and then for that funding to be used.” - [Official Report, 4/12/24](#)

Laura Caven added that she expected the process to be “much slicker, going forward”, but a long-term commitment was needed in order to attract people into posts created from the funding.

On the question of funding being used to add to existing budgets, Laura Caven said it was difficult to know for sure, because cuts to existing services meant services had changed:

“For example, we might be talking about the delivery of a service from a community centre, but the community centre is now shut. You then have to redesign the service.” - [Official Report, 4/12/24](#)

Lynne Currie, Senior Researcher - Further Education, Higher Education and Children’s social work, child protection and adoption, SPICe

10 January 2025

Note: Committee briefing papers are provided by SPICe for the use of Scottish Parliament committees and clerking staff. They provide focused information or respond to specific questions or areas of interest to committees and are not intended to offer comprehensive coverage of a subject area.
The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP www.parliament.scot

Annexe A: Whole Family Wellbeing Fund allocations to Children's Services Planning Partnerships

Table 2: Whole Family Wellbeing Funding allocations to CSPPs (Element 1 funding)

Local Authority	22/23 (£m)	23/24 (£m)	24/25 (£m)	2025-26 TBC
Aberdeen City	1.025	1.029	1.028	
Aberdeenshire	1.464	1.467	1.463	
Angus	0.657	0.654	0.647	
Argyll and Bute	0.439	0.438	0.442	
City of Edinburgh	2.199	2.201	2.234	
Clackmannanshire	0.337	0.337	0.341	
Dumfries and Galloway	0.917	0.917	0.902	
Dundee City	0.894	0.893	0.954	
East Ayrshire	0.832	0.833	0.825	
East				
Dunbartonshire	0.471	0.473	0.478	
East Lothian	0.579	0.583	0.590	
East Renfrewshire	0.492	0.495	0.484	
Falkirk	0.923	0.921	0.937	
Fife	2.289	2.288	2.290	
Glasgow City	4.666	4.663	4.594	
Highland	1.420	1.417	1.353	
Inverclyde	0.423	0.421	0.479	
Midlothian	0.535	0.540	0.565	
Moray	0.546	0.545	0.524	
Na h-Eileanan Siar	0.161	0.159	0.156	
North Ayrshire	0.959	0.954	0.954	
North Lanarkshire	2.351	2.346	2.281	
Orkney Islands	0.132	0.133	0.129	
Perth and Kinross	0.805	0.806	0.811	
Renfrewshire	0.988	0.986	1.009	
Scottish Borders	0.668	0.669	0.661	
Shetland Islands	0.158	0.157	0.146	
South Ayrshire	0.604	0.603	0.608	
South Lanarkshire	1.827	1.835	1.868	
Stirling	0.495	0.493	0.476	
West				
Dunbartonshire	0.604	0.602	0.621	
West Lothian	1.140	1.142	1.150	
Total	32.000	32.000	32.000	

Source: Scottish Government correspondence with SPICe

Annexe C

Aberlour written submission on Whole Family Wellbeing/Early Intervention

January 2025

“There is so much stigma around addiction and mental health but there is a trust there and it took just one person to see a wee bit of hope and things are totally different. I’m proud of the mum I am now. My wee girl has changed my life and I am entirely there for her.”

(Parent supported by Aberlour)

About Aberlour

Aberlour is Scotland’s largest children’s charity. Delivering more than fifty services across Scotland, we work with disadvantaged, marginalised and discriminated against children, young people and families, providing services and support in communities around the country. We help to overcome significant challenges families face, such as the impact of drugs and alcohol, growing up in and leaving care, poor mental health, living with a disability, or the impact of poverty and disadvantage.

We aim to provide help and support at the earliest opportunity to prevent problems becoming unmanageable or spiralling out of control. We are committed to Keeping the Promise and to realising the human rights of all children and young people. This means working every day to make rights real for the children, young people, and families we support and being unwavering in our ambition to ensure all of Scotland’s children have an equal chance regardless of their start in life.

Ending child poverty is Aberlour’s central mission as we believe this is the cornerstone of creating a fairer and more equal society. Poverty can contribute to and, often, be a cause of the multiple and intersecting challenges in families’ lives – such as poor physical and mental health, low educational attainment, disability, addiction and substance misuse, domestic abuse.

All children have a right to grow up and live free from poverty. We believe in tackling the root causes of poverty and disadvantage, such as inadequate income, lack of affordable housing, and limited access to education and employment opportunities. We also support reducing levels of debt that struggling families are burdened with that too often traps families in poverty. Increasing family income helps families to thrive and is a positive investment in our children and communities.

Keeping The Promise

In 2020 Scotland made a pledge to children, young people and families to do all we can to keep families together and where this is not possible, to provide the best care to help children thrive¹. Aberlour is committed to delivering The Promise, ensuring all children and young people across Scotland experience being safe and loved.

We provide care and support for children and families, helping them to overcome challenges in their lives. Wherever possible we help families to stay together and flourish. When a child is unable to live with their family, we ensure they are nurtured within safe and loving homes.

Whole Family Support

We believe family support should be available to every family who needs it, so they can access the right support, at the right time, for as long as needed. Children and families' right to support can best be realised through guaranteeing holistic, whole family support for any family who may need extra help.

Holistic family support includes a combination of practical, emotional and financial support and is provided in a way that reflects each families' individual circumstances. Services designed to support families must be shaped by the perspectives of families themselves, ensuring their voices are elevated and amplified and influence future care and support.

Article 18 of the UNCRC states that government must do all it can to provide parents with the help they need to bring up their children, where they may struggle to do so on their own due to the challenges in their lives². Realising the right to family support is a crucial part of how we best support and promote the wellbeing of all families across Scotland. This right to family support must be recognised on an equal footing as a child's right to health and education services. Our vision is all families can access services locally within their community.

At Aberlour we currently deliver dedicated family support services across 15 local authority areas, including Scotland's largest family support service in Glasgow.

Keeping the Promise for Families in Recovery

Scotland has the highest rate of drug related deaths in Europe – most recent statistics showing that deaths recorded in 2023 were more than four times higher

¹ <https://www.plan2430.scot/the-five-foundations/family/intensive-family-support/>

² https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20241128131423mp_/https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/drug-related-deaths/23/drug-related-deaths-23-report.pdf

than in 2000³. More than a quarter of drugs deaths in Scotland are women⁴. Scotland's drugs crisis is underpinned both by the impact of child poverty, with 1 in 4 children growing up in poverty⁵, and by the impact of trauma and poor mental health, with perinatal mental health concerns affecting 1 in 5 new and expectant mothers⁶. Poverty is a key driver of drugs deaths with those from the most deprived areas fifteen times more likely to die as a result of drugs⁷. If we are committed to tackling drugs deaths, then we must be relentless in our drive to combat poverty.

Every year the lives of thousands of children across Scotland are damaged by the impact of alcohol and drugs on families. Children too often end up in care due to the impact of parental substance use. Substance use is a direct risk factor in maternal deaths and women affected by substance use are at significant risk during the perinatal period, including from suicide. Women specific services – both community-based family support and residential rehabilitation and recovery services – are vital to reduce drugs harm affecting women and their children and to tackle the drugs deaths crisis.

Scotland must Keep The Promise for women in recovery and their children by keeping families together. This must include supporting families in recovery by providing accessible support both in the community and through residential rehabilitation support services. This requires the necessary investment and resourcing to provide women's specific services that support families to remain together during treatment and recovery.

Aberlour supports the Scottish Government's [National Mission](#) to reduce drugs deaths and improve lives impacted by drugs. We welcomed the announcement from the Scottish Government of an extra £20 million per year in funding to increase residential rehabilitation facilities across the country. These measures were announced as part of a wider £250 million package over five years, aimed at tackling Scotland's drug deaths crisis and reducing drugs harm⁸.

Although this commitment to investing in services and supports was for an initial five years, it is clear it will take longer to significantly reverse increasing levels of drug deaths and the underlying causes of drug use in Scotland. We believe this welcome commitment in investment and the necessary resources to effectively tackle drugs deaths and reduce drugs harm must be continued beyond 2026 if Scotland is to

³https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20241128131423mp_/https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/drug-related-deaths/23/drug-related-deaths-23-report.pdf

⁴https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20241128131423mp_/https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/drug-related-deaths/23/drug-related-deaths-23-report.pdf

⁵ <https://data.gov.scot/poverty/cpupdate.html>

⁶ https://maternalmentalhealthalliance.org/media/filer_public/fc/07/fc07914b-45f1-449f-8daa-6325d746bec8/mmha-pimhs-briefing-perinatal-mental-health-scotland-feb24.pdf

⁷https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20241128131423mp_/https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/drug-related-deaths/23/drug-related-deaths-23-report.pdf

⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/news/more-than-gbp-250-million-for-drug-deaths-emergency/>

achieve its ambition of permanently reducing drugs deaths and the harm caused by drugs and alcohol on children, families and communities across the country.

Supporting Families in Recovery at Aberlour

“I didn’t know if I was going to be able to take my baby home but I was referred to Aberlour and it felt like someone had got my back at last.”

(Parent supported by Aberlour)

At Aberlour we see the impact of alcohol and drugs on children and families every day. Working in communities around the country we support families affected by substance use and living with addiction. We deliver a range of trauma-informed services across 26 Scottish local authorities providing both early intervention and intensive whole family support services. Substance use, alcohol and drugs are common issues in the lives of families we work with across our family support services.

For children growing up in poverty and experiencing disadvantage too often drugs, alcohol and substance use are common issues they encounter affecting their lives. We know that where there are higher levels of poverty and disadvantage these issues are more prevalent. Consequently, this means an increased likelihood of associated trauma impacting on children and families living in poverty. We see the evidence of this through our work in areas of multiple deprivation such as in parts of Glasgow and Dundee. The devastating impact of alcohol and drugs on families is also a common factor in the lives of children who can no longer live at home with their families and who live with Aberlour in our residential children’s houses.

Scotland now has two dedicated Mother and Child Recovery Houses (MCHR)⁹, both of which are delivered by Aberlour with one in Dundee and the other in Falkirk. These houses are funded by the Scottish Government through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund. The primary aim of the support provided through each of these houses is keeping families together by creating safe, nurturing and loving spaces for women and their babies during their recovery journey. In each of our houses we provide a holistic approach to recovery that includes support with life skills, parenting, emotional wellbeing and therapeutic support. This includes wraparound nurture and a focus on safety enabling women to build trusting and positive relationships and strategies for future community recovery management.

In addition, Aberlour’s Intensive Perinatal Service in Falkirk provides community-based support to pregnant women and new mothers who are affected by substance use and who have a baby under 12 months of age¹⁰. The service is delivered in partnership with statutory and community partners and through co-production with

⁹ <https://www.aberlour.org.uk/service/mother-and-child-recovery-houses>

¹⁰ <https://www.aberlour.org.uk/service/intensive-perinatal-support-falkirk>

women. The primary aim is to maximise opportunities for new babies to remain safely in the care of their mother through facilitating recovery from problematic substance use and developing and enhancing parenting capacities.